

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA AT THE CIVIC RECEPTION ACCORDED BY MAYOR OF SYLHET JANUARY 21, 2013

I had no time to look at her. Nor had she any time to look at me. Not that Grace and I do not like each other. We do. But as we were driving this morning and afternoon from Sylhet city to Tamabil and then Jafflong, the gorgeous greenery, the unending skylines dotted by mountain peaks, valleys and fountains on one side and crop-fields and lovely rivers and canals on the other detained our eyes. I looked out from the car to the left, Grace to the right. We had an unannounced competition- - who is seeing the more beautiful sights. Do you want to know who won? We both, we both won as Sylhet is so beautiful. It's beautiful on all sides and all facets. God's limitless bounty is easily visible here. Grace and I feel proud to be in Sylhet, to be here with our Sylheti friends tonight.

The people of Sylhet are rightfully proud of their cultural richness, hydro-carbon and mineral deposits, tea gardens, and the informal but enormously important diplomacy they do by going out and living in different countries, including in the U.S.

As my delegation and I visited Tamabil and Jafflong today, we saw hundreds of people at work at stone quarry picking boulders from rivers, handling merchandise at the land port, and women selling betel leaves and other commodities at market places. The high pace of economic activities and the vast deposits of minerals and hydrocarbon in Sylhet make me feel very confident that Bangladesh can, in fact, graduate itself to a middle-income country in the next one decade or so. I understand Sylhet serves as a granary and also supplies fish resources throughout the country.

Much of Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserve comes from money remitted by Bangladeshi expatriates in different countries. I know a large number of these expatriates are from Sylhet. Their contribution to the economy is enormous. When I was in the U.S. last fall, I

tried to connect with the Bangladeshi diaspora in my country and understand their perspectives on economic development prospects in Bangladesh. I think Bangladeshis living abroad, particularly the Bangladeshi Americans carry huge potential for investment in productive sectors in Bangladesh. I'm going back home in mid-February and one of the goals of my visit is to engage with Bangladesh-Americans to tap this potential in a bid to take the U.S.-Bangladesh economic ties to a new height. I think Bangladesh's economic growth is on right track and we are happy to work with Bangladesh in supporting efforts to further enhance it.

I have often spoken about my vision of the next Asian Tiger, the Bengal Tiger, if you will. The basis of my optimism in Bangladesh is based on many things -- Bangladesh is such a rich country fertile soil, ample water, triple growing seasons, rich gas and coal deposits, a location that makes Bangladesh the nexus of the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, and, hard-working people. All of these come together in Sylhet. So, the reason for my optimism in Bangladesh is right here, here in Sylhet, it is all you Sylhetis.

I am lucky to have personally known and worked with three finance ministers from Sylhet- the Honorable AMA Muhith, late Saifur Rahman, and late SMSA Kibria. I pay my respect to them and late Humayun Rashid Chowdhury and late Abdus Samad Azad. I must tell you that we work closely with Honorable Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Honorable Chief Whip Abdus Shahid who hail from Sylhet region.

I am grateful to the Honorable Mayor for receiving me, my wife, and my delegation here tonight and all of you for your kind presence and warm welcome. We are grateful to you for your generosity and hospitality.

We have our best wishes for Sylhet, rich with the memory Hazrat Shah Jalal and Shah Poran, and mystic philosophers like Abdul Karim and Hason Raja.

Thank you.

=====

**As prepared for delivery*